

NCO Academy instructors build, shape future leaders

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If teaching and grooming future leaders in the Air Force's enlisted membership sounds like a challenge you'd like to tackle and an experience that would excite you, The Kirtland NCO Academy has a job for you.

Chief Master Sgt. Steve Sargent, the academy's commandant, said the oldest continuous professional military education academy in the country since 1955 is looking for some dedicated instructors who can lead students in coursework while also mentoring and supervising them when needed.

Students entering the academy are technical sergeants, and sometimes staff sergeants with a line number to become technical sergeants.

"It's a pure people job," Sargent explained, adding "it's a good job that all instructors are reluctant to leave."

But instructors eventually must leave because academy instructor position are three-year controlled tours, with only a one-year extension available in some cases.

No university teaching credentials are required to be considered for the job and those selected to become instructors attend rigorous coursework themselves before teaching students management theory, leadership skills and communication techniques.

To be eligible for an instructor position, you need to have a degree from the Community College of the Air Force and be a technical sergeant with at least three years of retainability.

"We welcome folks from all Air Force specialties," noted Master Sgt. Michael DeHart, the academy's resource director.

DeHart said the most successful instructors are people who are comfortable with speaking in front of people, self-starters and self-motivated and who are open to learning from others while teaching.

"The best instructors will learn more from their students than they give to their students," DeHart commented.

While the academy has one

opening now, more openings are expected in the spring as current instructors' tours wind down, requiring them to leave the academy.

Classes containing six flights of 15-16 students in a classroom are taught seven times a year. Annually, more than 650 students attend the six-week course program that concludes with a graduation dinner for students with their families and guests.

Senior Master Sgt. Rich Gormal, the academy's education director, said flexibility and being adaptable are traits that help instructors succeed at the academy. Those qualities are particularly helpful now as the curriculum undergoes change in the near future.

The new curriculum focus areas "are great and right on target for today's leadership challenges," Sargent noted.

DeHart said the academy has its own personality.

"Here at Kirtland, we like to have fun—but we also expect our staff to exceed the standard," he said. "We are

pretty innovative and like to try new things. Often, those 'experiments' become the way all academies do business."

"The (Kirtland NCO Academy) staff are some of the most professional enlisted troops I have ever had the privilege of working with," Sargent said. "They work hard to prepare our future NCOs with such style and grace that I am humbled to serve beside them."

"The success stories continue to mount as folks come off special duties better equipped as leaders and teachers to give back to their career fields..." Sargeant added.

The academy serves the Southwest region that includes students from Holloman, Cannon and Kirtland Air Force bases in New Mexico, Los Angeles AFB and Travis AFB in California, Luke AFB, Arizona and Nellis AFB in Nevada and some National Guard and Air Force Reserve units.

To learn more about becoming an instructor at the Kirtland NCO Academy, contact Gormal at 853-5130.